

A Soviet agent?

STATINTL

Evidence points to Oswald's training by Reds

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By JOHN KEPLINGER

(Second of a series)

Lee Harvey Oswald suddenly found himself in truly strange and foreign surroundings. From the giant metropolis of Moscow, he had been hastily removed to the small, bleak city of Minsk in the winter of 1959.

He had come a long way since that day in Los Angeles two months earlier when his passport application to travel abroad but also on Marine Corps procedures...

He had made his way to Russia seeking Soviet citizenship in a land where the political way of life conformed with his own distorted views.

But the course of events since Oswald's arrival in Moscow in mid-October had undergone a rapid change. His hoped-for citizenship was denied him and he was moved to an out-of-the-way place.

SOVIET AGENTS

In the opinion of Edward Ellis Smith of Palo Alto, a former U.S. security-intelligence officer

for the Army, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency, Oswald was at this juncture in the hands of Soviet military intelligence agents.

Smith, who has lived in Moscow and was the first full-time State Department security officer of the American Embassy there, has traced Oswald's odyssey from the time he obtained a passport in Los Angeles until the day four years later when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

Smith is convinced Oswald was a Soviet agent, but that he was not acting on orders of the Kremlin when he allegedly fired the shots that killed Kennedy.

In Minsk, Smith says, Soviet intelligence had a big job ahead: "... to obtain every particle of information from (Oswald), not merely on electronics and call signs (Oswald had been a radio technician) but also on Marine Corps procedures...

"An interrogation job of several months faced Soviet intelligence, especially if Oswald had been alert and had used his Marine Corps tour to prepare himself for this sort of interrogation," Smith continues.

"It is utterly inconceivable that a Soviet intelligence interrogation did not take place," he adds.

As for reports Oswald was given a low-paying (80 ruble or \$88 a month) sheet metal worker's job in Minsk, Smith is skeptical. He believes the job was simply a "cover" during the interrogation period.

RIFLE CLUB

Continuing with his analysis of Oswald's reported stay in Minsk, Smith says:

"We are told that while in Minsk Oswald joined a rifle club and practiced marksmanship. Now, there are no rifle clubs in the Soviet Union. Unless one belongs to a hunter's 'Sovkhoz' (for professional hunters), a Soviet citizen is allowed to practice shooting only within the framework of the All-Union Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force and Navy—a sort of combination national guard and reserve training program.

"The point is this: These organizations are under governmental direction. Foreigners are not allowed to join them. Therefore, Oswald either was a member of a Soviet outfit or, more likely, a special arrangement was made for him so he could practice shooting."

Oswald's interrogation dragged on into the spring of 1960, Smith estimates. When it finally ended, intelligence officials, probably began debating how best to utilize him.

Did Oswald have agent potential or was he too unstable? This was one of the prime questions confronting them, Smith believes.

While waiting for a decision to be made, Oswald apparently grew impatient, a trait that was to take on disastrous proportions a few short years later, Smith believes.

Still hungering for Soviet citizenship, Oswald managed to write a letter to the Marine Corps asking that he be discharged as a reservist so he could accept Soviet citizenship. (The Marines complied with an unsatisfactory discharge.)

It is almost incredible that the letter passed Soviet censorship, Smith acknowledges, because it could have damaged Oswald's "agent potential."

There could have been some reason for the letter, but it is Smith's assessment that it got through censorship as the result of some inexplicable "snafu."

Despite this jolt, Soviet intelligence decided to take Oswald into the fold, Smith is convinced. As evidence, he cites the following events:

—Oswald's mother, Mrs. Margaret Oswald, began receiving letters from Minsk in which her son dropped sly, anti-Soviet hints and made mention of a desire to return home. This represented a sudden and uncharacteristic change of heart, Smith believes.

—Oswald apparently began mixing in circles well above the station of an alleged sheet metal worker, for he met and began courting Marina Nikolayevna Prusakova, reportedly the niece of a Soviet intelligence colonel.

—In February, 1961, Oswald wrote the American Embassy in Moscow stating he wanted to renew his passport and return home.

—On April 30, 1961, Oswald married the attractive, 19-year-old Marina.

These latter two acts are especially significant and completely contradictory under Soviet conditions, Smith contends. He implies the Russians would not look kindly on an American defector supposedly intent on defecting with a Russian wife.

"The logical interpretation," Smith continues, "is that by this time a firm decision had been made as to what (Oswald's) mission was to be.

"Furthermore, the intelligence operators had decided to establish 'control' through a Russian wife who would leave hostages behind, who was susceptible to discipline and suitable for training, and who could be used as Oswald's assistant—among other things, for communications," Smith asserts.

In subsequent letters to his mother, Oswald requested financial aid to return home. In one letter written about December, 1961, Oswald announced he and his family would receive exit visas in February and be home about March, 1962.